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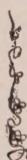
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THEATRE WORLD



Danny Kaye

who is the theatre's man of the moment. His return visit to England has proved that his tremendous and well deserved popularity has if anything soared to even greater heights. He is appearing at the Palladium for a six weeks' season, and afterwards will tour the provinces.

DOROTHY WILDING



66

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Edited by Frances Stephens

June 1949

HERE is fast growing a much greater air of uncertainty in the West End and the early withdrawal of unsuccessful plays is becoming a quite common event. In the past weeks not a few have had unexpectedly short runs. *The Power of Darkness*, with Stewart Granger and Jean Simmons in the cast, it is true, hardly deserved a run; but *Marriage Story* (Strand) and *A Woman's Place* (Vaudeville) a few years back might easily have succeeded; likewise *The Human Touch* (Savoy), which, though it certainly enjoyed a few months in the West End, was disappointingly received. Probably we are now getting to the point where too little money is chasing too many goods, the sort of situation in which the theatre is an early casualty.

On the bright side we can report the well deserved success of *Black Chiffon* and *The Lady's Not For Burning*, while as we go to press *Sauce Tartare*, the new revue at the Cambridge, has received a big hand, as has *The Male Animal* at the Arts, which is undoubtedly all set for transfer.

Plays produced too late for review include *Two Dozen Red Roses*, with Evelyn Laye, at the Lyric (25th May); *Ann Veronica*, with Wendy Hiller (Piccadilly, 20th May); and *A Man About a Dog*, with Griffith Jones as the star (Princes, 17th May); while due early in June are *Champagne for Delilah* at the New on the 2nd, *My Mother Said . . .*, Fortune, on the 3rd, and *Love in Albania*, at the Lyric, Hammersmith, which follows the Salzburg Marionettes on the 7th.

The Wagner Season at Covent Garden has brought back a pre-war glitter to the Opera House and is continuing until 10th June, the Opera Season proper ending on the 11th

Over the Footlights

with *The Marriage of Figaro*, though in the following week there will be three performances of *Pelléas et Mélisande* by the Opera Comique. Meantime the season of opera at the Stoll Theatre opened auspiciously on 14th May with Verdi's *Falstaff*.

Donald Wolfit's Shakespearean season at the Bedford finished on 21st May with *Much Ado About Nothing* to enable him to fulfil prior commitments at Belfast, Glasgow and Nottingham. The current season of plays by Bernard Shaw at the Bedford is, however, presented by Mr. Wolfit and the company includes Michael Golden, Oliver Burt, Dorothy Green and Beatrice Rowe. Mr. Wolfit hopes to reopen a season of Shakespeare in Camden Town early in September.

That firmly established institution the Open Air Theatre in Regents Park will begin its season on 2nd June with *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Michael Benthall's production of *Cymbeline* was added to the 1949 Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon, on 20th May, with Leon Quartermaine as Cymbeline, Kathleen Michael as Imogen, Wynne Clark as the Queen, Harry Andrews as Pisanio, and John Slater as Iachimo.

Mr. Phillip Barrett, whose Repertory Company has achieved outstanding success in the provinces, is to experiment this year with a sixteen week season at the Scala Theatre, opening on Whit-Monday.

Last but not least, it has now been announced that *Bless The Bride*, which has been so long and so successfully with us, is to be withdrawn on 11th June. Sir Charles Cochran has arranged as successor at the Adelphi a new Herbert-Ellis show, *Tough at the Top*.

F.S.

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New Shows of the Month

"Royal Highness"—Lyric, Hammersmith, 13th April.
"Brigadoon"—His Majesty's, 14th April.
"Othello"—Bedford, 25th April.
"A Woman in Love"—Embassy, 26th April.
"Son of Heaven"—New Lindsey, 2nd May.
"Black Chiffon"—Westminster, 3rd May.
"Shooting Star"—Playhouse, 3rd May.
"The Beaux' Stratagem"—Phoenix, 5th May.
"Hark My Archangel!"—Boiton's, 5th May.
"Miss Turner's Husband"—St. Martin's, 6th May.
"The Lady's Not for Burning"—Globe, 11th May.
"Number Ten Downing Street"—Bolton's, 12th May.
"John Wright's Marionettes"—Lyric, Hammersmith, 16th May.
"Continental Revue"—Torch, 17th May.

"Brigadoon"

THIS much heralded American musical did not disappoint London's theatregoers who will obviously flock to His Majesty's for many months to come to enjoy the unsophisticated charm and brilliant dancing of a show that has many unusual qualities.

Brigadoon is the story of a Scottish Highland village which reappears out of the mists for one day every hundred years. Two young American tourists happen upon this phenomenon and one of them loses his heart to a village lassie, with many complications.

Once again chief laurels must go to the dancers, who add wonderful vigour to a tale that might otherwise have been over-sentimental, and James Jamieson, who arranged the dances, might well be hailed as the star of the piece. Another big bouquet must go to Noelle Gordon, delightfully amusing as Meg Brockie in the two hit numbers, "The Love of my Life" and "My Mother's Wedding Day," even though the part was unavoidably reminiscent of *Oklahoma's* Ado Annie.

Philip Hanna as the American hero proved to have an attractive personality and voice, well matching Patricia Hughes as Fiona, the girl he loves. Others who are well remembered in a long cast are Hiram Sherman as the hero's friend, Ivor Barnard as the dominie, and last but not least, Noelle de Mosa, for her most brilliant dancing.

F.S.

"Othello"

IT was particularly interesting to return to the Bedford for another performance of *Othello* after the two principal interpreters had exchanged roles, Donald Wolfit to play Iago and Joseph O'Conor Othello. This seemed to give the better result, although Mr. O'Conor's Othello was not so good as his Hamlet. He was not sufficiently grave and sombre in the early scenes. The slight but much needed suggestion of a decline into the vale of years, "yet that's not much," was completely lacking, leaving simply a young, handsome and untroubled Moor, whose face too readily set into a politely empty smile. Later, after Iago's poison had begun to work, the real Othello was rather more adequately presented. Donald Wolfit was a fascinating Iago, jovial, graceful, false and cruel. His ever-ready expressions of sympathy and encouragement had the stamp of dishonesty more palpable to the initiated than his unmasked soliloquies.

H.G.M.

(Continued on page 8)

Margaret Webster's play is a simple, direct telling of this story, achieving its strength and appeal by reliance on the facts aided by some incisive acting well matched to the time and people.

Judy Campbell, a charming pre-Raphaelite Princess, plays with complete surety the title part. Its effect is hardly likely to miss an audience's heart, so moving are the facts, but Miss Campbell conveys very competently the nuances of her physical and mental decline under years of close confinement. Her performance shines especially in the last Act, where a released Princess meets her guilty husband with a dignity that is superb.

Hector Macgregor is the lover, and Philip Leaver the husband, two contestants well fitting into a story and setting not without its touch of Ruritania. A key character is an officer turned editor, whose journalistic influence is decisive in remediating the wrong. For his quiet yet forceful playing of this part Michael Goodliffe held his own, and a little more, in a good cast.

Daphne Rye directs a play which may be seen by a wider public than at Hammersmith.

F.J.D.

“Black Chiffon”

Scenes from Lesley Storm's absorbing play in which Flora Robson gives a brilliant performance as a well-to-do woman accused of kleptomania. The play is produced by Charles Hickman and presented by Alec L. Rea and E. P. Clift.

(Right):

Alicia Christie (Flora Robson), accused of stealing a nightdress from a London store, is questioned by a psychiatrist (Anthony Ireland).

(Below):

Another scene from the play. (L. to R.): Wyndham Goldie as Robert Christie, whose unsympathetic attitude is much to blame, and Rachael Gurney and Owen Holder as Thea and Roy, the Christies' children.

PICTURES BY HOUSTON-ROGERS





CHARLES VICTOR

who is starring with Yvonne Arnaud in *Traveller's Joy*, which celebrates its first anniversary at the Criterion Theatre on 2nd June.

(Portrait Vivienne)



VIOLA LYEL

who continues to inspire many laughs as the hearty sportsmistress in John Dighton's hilarious farce *The Happiest Days of Your Life* at the Apollo.

(Portrait Vivienne)



BRYAN FORBES

who appears as Gertrude Lawrence's carefree young son, Jimmie, in *September Tide* at the Aldwych, still one of London's biggest successes.

(Portrait Landseer)

"A Woman in Love"

THIS being the English version by Michael Redgrave and Diana Gould of *Amoureuse*, the masterpiece of Georges de Porto-Riche, important in Paris in 1891, it can be recommended to students of dramatic history but not to seekers after entertainment. M. de Porto-Riche was an authority on love as a literary theme. This is an attitude that has never been so popular or significant on this side of the Channel. Mentally and linguistically, we are ill-equipped to participate in this Gallic exercise. Here is another instance. *Amoureuse* means what the author was writing about; "a woman in love" strikes a sentimental note which he would have avoided.

For two acts of comedy—very slow comedy—and one act of melodramatic farce, the action revolves round the boredom of matrimony. Germaine is satisfied to have Etienne and is unable to leave him alone. Etienne is flattered to receive so much attention from a beautiful woman, even his wife, but longs for freedom, even freedom to work. This has been going on for five years and all that time Pascal, in love with Germaine, has been visiting the house daily. It is virtually—and virtuously a *menage à trois* in which nothing happens. This is both improbable and unamusing. However, Michael Redgrave, as Etienne, is immaculately picturesque; Margaret Rawlings is immaculately modish and rather sedate for the kind of woman Germaine is said to be; and Michael Hordern is immaculately Bohemian as Pascal. Of course, in the third act, all three cease being so immaculately bourgeois, but by that time we have ceased to care.

H.G.M.

"Son of Heaven"

ANYTHING written by Lytton Strachey attracts attention and one is grateful to Bibiena Productions Limited for this production of his only play. *Son of Heaven* is really an historical footnote to that other Chinese episode known among the English as the Boxer Rebellion. The action takes place in the Imperial Palace, Pekin, during the day and night that preceded the flight of the court, as the international force raised the siege of the legations and captured the city. For five years the Empress Dowager has used the Emperor as a rubber-stamp. Suddenly and secretly a determined reformer gains access to the Son of Heaven and for a few hours hope burns fitfully, only to be extinguished by the wily and determined Dowager.

The writing appears to render somewhat tepid an exciting story. There are, of course, some good things in the writing, but they would have been just as good in an essay.

Many beautiful costumes are used, which appear to be authentic, but nobody receives credit for this on the programme.

It is recognised that the Empress Dowager was an extraordinary woman and, even if she were not, it is necessary that, as a character in a play, she should appear remarkable. In Selma Vaz Dias' performance there was little suggestion of anything unusual in her mental composition. In the absence of a glint of sinister magnetic power, she seems merely a commonplace woman lacking control. The Emperor is a dreadful part—a suppressed, self-pitying, sentimental wash-out—and Peter Coke was unable to make it acceptable. The best performances came from Gibb McLaughlin as Li Lien-Ying, the

foremost of the Empress' five thousand eunuchs, and Shelagh Fraser as Ta He, a lady-in-waiting, beloved of the Emperor. Only these two looked Chinese and only these two succeeded in presenting a character to whom one could lend sympathy and credence.

H.G.M.

"Black Chiffon"

THIS is a play to be commended on every count. First it is brightly written; secondly, it deals with a theme of some topical interest, and thirdly it provides that most accomplished actress, Flora Robson, with a part well worthy of her special talents.

The theme centres around the baffling problem as to why Mrs. Christie, a well-to-do and cultivated woman, should on sudden impulse steal a black chiffon nightdress from a West End store. It is topical too in that a psychiatrist is brought in to endeavour a solution and, at a time when a psychiatrist is likely to crop up in every Hollywood film, it says much for the skill in handling this part of the story that we remain interested and even absorbed during the long dialogue between Anthony Ireland and the accused woman. In this difficult scene Flora Robson is superb, conveying in every gesture the sense of nerve strain and the reactions of an innately worthy and sensible woman faced with her own inexplicable action.

It does not much matter that the problem

is not really solved in the end (is it ever possible wholly to understand the uncharted world of the subconscious?) and the climax of the play is centred in Alicia Christie's determination to protect her son's marriage from the breath of scandal. She chooses prison rather than the psychiatrist's defence.

Wyndham Goldie gives a beautifully restrained performance as Robert Christie, Alicia's suppressed and jealous husband, whose attitude to his wife's relationship to their only son is the real background of the tragedy, and Anthony Ireland carries about him an air of authority as Bennett Hawkins, the psychiatrist. Another sensitive performance comes from Rachael Gurney as Thea, Alicia's understanding daughter. Owen Holder as the son and Dorothy Gordon as Louise, his bride-to-be, hold our sympathy, and the Nannie of Janet Barrow provides one very touching scene. Charles Hickman directs.

F.S.

"Shooting Star"

SUBTRACT James Hayter's part from *Shooting Star*, Basil Thomas' new comedy at the Playhouse, and little remains—but what is *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark? So it comes to this: the play stands or falls by Mr. Hayter's portrayal of Joseph Lawson, League Football Club chairman, whose attention to his own printing business



"The Rising Wind"

at the

EMBASSY THEATRE

● A scene from the first production in the current Arts Council season of plays at the Embassy. *The Rising Wind* is a provocative American play by Lee Gilbert which has not yet been seen in America and which received its World Premiere at the Library Theatre, Manchester, on 22nd March. The Peter Cotes Company have brought it to London from Manchester, Peter Cotes himself having produced the play with his usual sure touch. *L. to R.:* Natalie Lynn, Wensley Pithey, Joan Miller, Josephine Fraser and Brian Haines. (Picture by Kemsley Studios)

is in inverse proportion to his absorption in the shadier by-ways of football finance.

Mr. Hayter carries the play very comfortably upon his broad shoulders; so all is well. His is a richly entertaining study of a not unfamiliar type of plain, blunt man blundering his clumsy way through an entanglement of his own contrivance to the inevitable exposure and disgrace that await the incompetent intriguer.

Yet such is this actor's artistry that for all his trickery, Joseph Lawson remains a disreputable but likeable rogue. Gesture, grimace, twinkling eye, blandness of wheedling, explosive wrath—all build up a character which we accept with a chuckle in the theatre, although we would all of us give such a rascal a wide berth in business or private life.

By way of contrast to such rascality, Colin Douglas and Robert Perceval, in Jack Bannerman and Ben Woodhall give us two football club directors of heroic build and countenance with characters as perfect as their profiles.

Sympathetically drawn, and most intelligently played by Avice Landone, is the part of Miss Rawlings, the competent secretary who keeps the ramshackle printing business going while its sanguine head spends the firm's time conspiring with his club's trainer to steal a rival club's star player. It is part of Lawson's desserts that she leaves his employment after 19 years unappreciated service for the arms of the firm's best customer, Mr. Blake, pleasantly played by Raymond Francis.

Frank Pettitt gives us a ripe picture of the flashy trainer, Skid Evans; and of the same colourful *genre* is Cameron Miller's comical works' foreman, Wells.

Entwined with the intrigue to entice the rival club's star player, Ned Rutter, is that artless young man's Kipps-like love affair with Lawson's junior clerk, Mavis Pink, who despite her appealing innocence proves herself the best manager of them all. These parts are attractively played by Derek Blomfield and Charman Eyre.

Heather Gratrix (Lulu Smith) and Ann Titheradge (Beryl Armstrong) as contrasting types of office staff are also well cast.

W.B.C.

"The Beaux' Stratagem"

THE gulf that divides us from George Farquhar's lighthearted world of beaux and highwaymen and lovely ladies is very wide indeed, which is probably why it seems most appropriate that John Clements' production at the Phoenix should be adorned with many stylised touches, particularly in the accompanying music; in the charmingly regimented exits and entrances and in the lovely costumes and decor.

Kay Hammond delights with her portrayal of Mrs. Sullen and John Clements is gay

and nicely voluble as master turned servant, a splendid partner for Robert Eddison's elegance as servant turned master.

The others in the cast romp through the piece with great gusto, particularly Hamlyn Benson as Squire Sullen, Lloyd Pearson as Gibbett, the highwayman, and David Bird as the Innkeeper. Gwen Cherrell is a saucy innkeeper's daughter, and Iris Russell's Dorinda is a splendid foil to Mrs. Sullen's sophistry.

The most diverting passage in the play as presented by John Clements is undoubtedly the bedroom scene in which Miss Hammond's celebrated drawl and pout have an added flavour and Mr. Clements swashbuckles to very good purpose until the arrival of the highwayman turns all into rollicking farce, and the would-be lover willy nilly into a rescuer of a damsel in distress.

F.S.

"Hark My Archangel"

HARK My Archangel by William Manluk is a running commentary on the flight of ages with special attention to certain historical characters, a superficial knowledge of whom can be treated with theatrical flamboyance. The author-performer recites with the effortless ease of a woodland stream. His lightning changes of costume and make-up are admirable. In the character of Edgar Allan Poe he approached nearest to a genuine interpretation.

H.G.M.

"Miss Turner's Husband"

A GAY trifle, deftly put together, brightly written and briskly played, Gilbert Wakefield's new comedy is a safe recommendation to anyone looking for a first-rate evening's entertainment.

Till Joan Turner, very much in love, married her former War Office boss, Henry Roeburn, she had omitted to tell him that she had written a play around her experiences as a temporary clerk, and had it accepted. Somewhat taken aback by this revelation of his young bride's unsuspected virtuosity, Henry was very much the proud, admiring and doting husband when first night success proclaimed the play a winner. Not so happy about it when, a couple of months later, the glamour of his pretty wife's success somewhat faded and his home become a theatrical salon, he found himself reduced in the eyes of her growing circle of friends to the status of "Miss Turner's husband," and regarded by them variously as a nuisance, an ogre and a nonentity.

So at last the worm turns. There is a fleeting glimpse of Petruchio when, egged on by a platonic friend of his youth, of feminine gender, he determines to put his foot down, insisting on "Miss Turner" being Mrs. R. and behaving as such, forbidding her

planned week-end with theatrical friends at a country hotel, and ordering the same friends out of his house.

Ensues a duel in which each side enlists the help of the green eyed monster, with unintended complications and unforeseen results for both parties. Since, however, they have not ceased to be in love with one another, Joan and Henry find no serious difficulty in finally making it up—presumably to live happy ever after—with Joan's not-so-bright-and-snappy second play still unfledged.

The play is particularly well cast. Greta Gynt gives a ravishing performance as Joan Roeburn, and it says much for Ronald Ward's acting, as her fond but exasperated husband, that, with quiet humour and a completely natural poise, he manages to keep the balance. A rich piece of comedy acting is Derek Tansley's portrayal of Henry's irrepressible stockbroker partner, Bill Harker: never were bricks dropped with more self-satisfied aplomb.

Marian Spencer as a deft and wittily sophisticated leading lady is well matched by Patrick Waddington's technical competence in rendering the part of the leading man in Joan's play, while Elwyn Brook-Jones gives credence to the almost incredible part of the play's backer, the boorish but boring libertine, Lord Oscar Benton.

Jill Esmond, as Helen Shorton, and Margot Boyd, as Henry's "horsey" sister from the Shires, give well contrasted types of the huntin' set, "possible" and "impossible." Even the minor part of the maid, Mabel, is played attractively by June Annette Bell.

W.B.C.

The Lady's Not For Burning"

CHRISTOPHER Fry's unusual and highly amusing verse play was reviewed at length in our pages when it was first produced at the Arts with Alec Clunes in the role now played by John Gielgud. What was said then can only now be emphasised, that this is a play in a thousand. But what is most gratifying and a little surprising is that so sophisticated a work should receive wholehearted approval from the general theatregoer, for there is no doubt that this play about a discharged soldier who wants to be hanged and an alleged witch who does not want to burn, has little plot and depends for its appreciation on subtleties and satire and on the superb extravagance of its language. Never were words flung about with more abandon and profligacy or made to sound more beautiful. One could not expect all that and action too; and happily the audiences at the Globe have recognised this.

John Gielgud's virility as the soldier and Pamela Brown's haunting quality as the witch will always be remembered. Likewise

In the News



CLAIRE BLOOM

the charming leading ingenue of last year's Stratford-upon-Avon Season, who is appearing with John Gielgud and Pamela Brown in *The Lady's Not for Burning*, at the Globe.

(Portrait Dorothy Wilding)



PETER USTINOV

the brilliant young actor-author-producer, who is to star in and produce the new Eric Linklater comedy *Love in Albania*, opening at the Lyric, Hammersmith, on 7th June.

(Portrait Vivienne)

Eliot Makeham's apologetic little chaplain and Peter Bull's vociferous Justice, not to mention Esme Percy's superbly disreputable drunken tramp.

The fifteenth century scenery and costumes by Oliver Messel are a joy to behold.

F.S.

"No. 10 Downing Street"

WE welcome a play with a political subject. *Number 10 Downing Street* by Stephen King-Hall tells in melodramatic terms the story of a twirp, a filibuster and a *femme fatale*. Supposed to be some time in the future, it is really Boer War period. Imagine, therefore, that some Power at that time had overwhelmed us. Military defeat and foreign occupation have shattered the governing elite; some are executed, some collaborate, some fly the country, and some go into hiding to organise resistance. The last two categories only appear in the play, which has only four characters — two politicians, a political hostess and a naval officer. All three men are in some sort of sentimental relationship with the woman. Finally this, of course, switches the interest out of the political sphere. Still, an attempt is made by the author himself and by each of his characters to subordinate sex to politics and for a long time it succeeds.

Nigel Clarke fills the part of the Minister whose last act before diving into a submarine to be taken to safety is to appoint himself Prime Minister. He intends to perform remote control. He is called Jones and all Wales could feel affronted. Ballard Berkeley, as Richard Vernon, acts as foil by expressing open disgust at the Jones line and himself choosing the hard way. Ruth Lodge plays Ann, wife to Jones but in love with Vernon, with whom she stays during the occupation and becomes his chief of staff. The Navy is decorously represented by John Brooking. The dialogue has the concrete facing of political discussion. H.G.M.

John Wright's Marionettes

THE high order of John Wright's Marionettes is gratifying to national pride. So English a name seems unusual in professional puppetry. The programme is devised as a divertissement offered to aristocratic puppets by a puppet manager of mirth. Following many original grotesques is Maria Marten in four acts. Dear Maria is well suited to the burlesque of puppetry. Corder is the concentrated essence of Victorian stage villainy. His lines are nicely spoken with horrible malignity and an occasional dirty laugh.

(Continued on page 40)

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Ernest Piaste: You speak Polish, Madame.

Lady Pitts: Do I? I asked you if you were a stray cat too. I asked you if some other fat cat was lapping at your saucer of milk.

EDITH EVANS as Lady Pitts and PETER FINCH as Ernest Piaste in Act 1 of James Bridie's brilliant new comedy. The scene is Le Toit aux Porcs, a London restaurant.

“Daphne Laureola”

A NEW play by Mr. Bridie is always something of an event. *Daphne Laureola*, his latest, is drawing all London to Wyndham's Theatre, where Edith Evans is proving herself worthy of the title of our greatest living actress in the enchanting role of Lady Pitts. It is indeed hard to say whether Dame Edith owes more to James Bridie or Mr. Bridie to Dame Edith, so perfect is the partnership.

The play was fully reviewed in our last issue and our readers will be familiar with the story of this provocative lady who while "under the influence" scales Olympian heights of rhetoric in a London restaurant, casting a spell over a young Pole, who, together with the assorted group in the

restaurant is invited to tea at the lady's Hampstead home, and how in the end she marries her chauffeur, so much does her reach exceed her grasp.

An excellent company is in support, particular praise being due to Peter Finch, a newcomer to the West End, for his clever portrayal of the Pole, and to Felix Aylmer for his most moving and sensitive Sir Joseph Pitts.

The play is presented by Sir Laurence Olivier, who is to be congratulated on an unerring choice of play and company. Murray Macdonald, who has done such excellent work in the past, directs with his usual imaginative touch, and the decor is by Roger Furse and Roger Ramsdell.

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN



(Above and below): Some of the diners at Le Toit aux Porcs Restaurant.

(Above, l. to r.): Mark Stone as Mr. Watson, and Billy Thatcher and Ireland Wood as the 1st and 2nd Spivs.



Diana Graves as A Bored Woman and Kenneth Hyde as A Bored Man, a diverting couple who find little or no pleasure in each other's company.



Lady Pitts: I should like to know where you live. Come here and write it down . . . thank you very much.

Lady Pitts, still in her mood of alcoholic exaltation, asks for the address of Maisie MacArthur (Anna Turner), while Piaste looks on in adoration.



Lady Pitts: Yes, Vincent, perhaps I had better come with you. You have the car?

Vincent, Lady Pitts' chauffeur-keeper, discreetly persuades his mistress to leave the restaurant. (Peter Williams as Vincent.)



Lady Pitts: I'm sorry you are unhappy. Try one of these repulsive little cakes.

Act 2. Scene 1, reveals a quiet domestic scene in Hampstead. Lady Pitts is decorum itself and she pooh-poohs her elderly husband's fear that some unexpected visitors may come to tea. But his apprehension, which is no doubt founded on past experience, is fully justified, and the first visitor who comes as the result of Lady Pitts' subsequently forgotten broadcast invitation to tea is Ernest Piaste, who wishes to declare his undying love for his goddess with all the passionate humourlessness of the Slav.



(Left):

FRANK
PETTINGELL

as Mr. Gooch, another of the diners at the restaurant who had received an invitation from
Lady Pitts.



Sir Joseph: Did you see the *Observer* anywhere? Oh, sorry, I'm interrupting.

Piaste has been joined in Lady Pitts' Summerhouse by Maisie MacArthur and her friends, whom he regards as distressing Philistines. Sir Joseph, who is very deaf, surprises the visitors in a moment of horse play. (Felix Aylmer as Sir Joseph.)

Lady Pitts: What have I given you? A little common sense?

Piaste: No. You have given me hope.

The moving love scene between Ernest Piaste and Lady Pitts, of which Sir Joseph is an understanding spectator.





Piaste: I give you my sacred word of honour that I will never again attempt to see your wife. She will be to me as Beatrice was to Dante.

A week later Sir Joseph surprises the Pole trying to see his wife again, and with consummate skill and tact endeavours to make the young man view his infatuation in a new light.

(Below):

Sir Joseph: I loved you . . . how do they put it? in my fashion. Kitty. The best I could do.

The tender scene between Sir Joseph and his wife towards the end of Act 2 and shortly before the old man is suddenly taken ill and dies.





In Le Toit aux Porcs Restaurant six months later Vincent and Lady Pitts drink to their marriage, by which we are to understand Daphne has escaped her Apollo.



Maisie: Mr. Gooch—here's gravel in your earhole.

Maisie and her friends join in the celebration in typical fashion. (Robin Lloyd as Bill Wishforth, Alexander Harris as Bob Kentish, Eileen O'Hara as Helen Willis, and right Martin Miller as George, the long-suffering waiter.)



Mr. Gooch: Care to join Mr. Watson and me? We've nearly finished, but we'd be very pleased.

Mr. Gooch who had been present on the earlier occasion recognises Ernest Piaste and jovially asks him to join his table.



Mr. Gooch: You gave us all a bit of a turn. Take a swig of rum. That'll steady you. George, fetch some brandy.

When Ernest hears that Sir Joseph Pitts died six months before and that his widow had married Vincent, the chauffeur, the shock is too great for him and he faints.



Lady Pitts: Do you propose to make a public speech at me?

Ernest upbraids his goddess for her perfidy in marrying another.



Lady Pitts: I have nothing to do with all this. It is all in your own head. I told you that. If you feel wretched it isn't my fault. I won't be blamed. It's not fair.

Lady Pitts refuses to be embroiled in the young man's passionate arguments.



Lady Pitts: Stay where you are. I can deal with this young fool.

Vincent becomes very angry at Piaste's interference, but his wife is more than equal to the occasion and, though sober, is still very eloquent. Note, however, the unsafe portion of the floor over which she sailed with perfect safety in her sublime state of transportation of the first act. Now she is down to earth and matter of fact and must therefore pick her way gingerly around the dangerous spot.

(Left):

The closing moment of the play. After the skirmish with Ernest Piaste, Vincent and his wife, devoutly wishing they had not been tempted to revisit Le Toit aux Porcs, leave the restaurant, presumably for ever.



A charming scene from Act 1, Scene 1, in the Hall of Wootton Manor, Sussex. The occasion is the return of Belinda Wootton (Adele Dixon, centre), to her home. In the picture she is singing "I dreamed I was at home again."

"*Belinda Fair*" AT THE SAVILLE

THIS delightful new romantic musical is noteworthy for its charming setting and story, for the excellent singing of the principals and for some graceful tunes in addition to the popular numbers "I'm off to the Low Countree" and "Sweet Nellie Gwynne." The story is set in the year 1702, in the days of Queen Anne, and is about a lovely young lady, Belinda Wootton, who impersonates her brother and goes to the wars, having already fallen in love with her Colonel. After many adventures her real identity is discovered and she plights her troth with the Colonel, at the same time resolving for ever the family feud between the Woottons and O'Malleys. In the leading roles Adele Dixon and John Battles are every inch the romantic couple, and there are splendid performances from Jerry Verno and Daphne Anderson, among others. The book is by Eric Maschwitz and Gilbert Lennox with music by Jack Strachey. Charles Goldner is the able director and the show is presented by Leslie Henson and John Buckley Ltd.

PICTURES BY
HOUSTON-ROGERS



The Red Coats come to Wootton Manor to collect Romilly Wootton who, however, evades the call-up, his place being taken by Belinda Wootton. The soldiers drink a toast before singing their spirited number "I'm off to the Low Countree." Colonel Miles O'Malley (John Battles) is seen in the centre.

(Below): Peregrine, the Wootton's faithful servant, is seen in the Low Countries with his "squad." An amusing moment from Act 1, Scene 2, showing Jerry Verno as Peregrine, second from right.





A scene from Act 1, Scene 3, in the Kitchen of an Inn near Venloo. Belle Barrow and her troupe of actresses have arrived in the Low Countries to entertain the troops, an 18th Century equivalent of E.N.S.A.!



(Right):

The Colonel in a gay moment with Belle Barrow (Daphne Anderson) during the singing of her hit number "Sweet Nellie Gwynne." Belinda, who naturally is not to be enticed by any of the young ladies of Drury Lane, is very jealous of Belle, but powerless to protest in her guise as a young officer.



(Top left): Adele Dixon in Act 2, Scene 1, when she goes disguised as an actress to a Castle in the enemy's territory to get information for the Colonel, only to find that the host is not a doddering old man but the amorous Duc de Frisac.

(Above): Peregrine, anxious to save his mistress, has a difficult encounter with the Duc de Frisac (Ferdy Mayne), who later discovers the plot after the arrival of Colonel O'Malley and throws all three into the cellar of the castle.

(Left): The happy ending to the play, back in Wootton Manor after Miles O'Malley has discovered Belinda's identity. With Peregrine they had been rescued from the cellar just in the nick of time, and it was then that Miles had discovered that his young subordinate was a woman with whom he had really been in love all along.

"Adventure Story"

Scenes from Terence Rattigan's powerful play about the life of Alexander the Great at the St. James's, with its brilliant company and most colourful settings is a real theatrical feast. Peter Glenville produces.

(Above): Alexander (Paul Scofield) instructs his army leaders on the eve of the decisive battle against the Persians. Seated, left to right, Raymond Westwell as Ptolemy, Cecil Trouner as Cleitus, Robert Fleming as Philotas, Julian Dallas as Hephaestion, Anthony Baird as Perdicas, and Nicholas Hannen as Parmenion.

PICTURES BY
ANGUS McBEAN



(Above): Gwen Ffrangcon Davies (centre) as the Queen Mother of the Persians with her daughter-in-law (Hazel Terry, left), and granddaughter (Junc Rodney).



(Left): Alexander engineers the death of the faithful Cleitus. A dramatic moment from the play, showing Joy Parker as Roxana, Cecil Trouner as Cleitus, and Paul Scofield as Alexander.



"CARMEN"

OPERA AT SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE

● Scenes from two recent outstanding productions by the Sadler's Wells Opera Company. *Above:* The dramatic final scene from Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Carmen*, first produced last February. The dying Carmen (Anna Pollak) is on the right attended by Frasquita (Marjorie Shires) and Morales (Cecil Lloyd); Don Jose (James Johnston) with arms outstretched, leans against the pallisade, centre. *Extreme left* Mercedes (Elsie Morison).

Below: A scene from Alan Gordon's production of *Gianni Schicchi*, first produced on 5th April, with scenery and costumes by Peter Hoffer. Gianni Schicchi (Edmund Donlevy) impersonating the dying Buoso Donati bequeaths the best portions of the estate to himself, to the chagrin of Buoso's relations.



"GIANNI SCHICCHI"

Pictures by Angus McBean



Harry Andrews as Don Pedro, Anthony Quayle as Benedick and Diana Wynyard as Beatrice, in John Gielgud's production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, with decor by Mariano Andreu.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL, 1949

The First Three Plays

by H. G. MATTHEWS

CONDITIONS for the opening of the 1949 Festival have been most favourable. Long hours of sunshine and the highest temperature for Easter on record have been Nature's prelude to the performances.

Mr. Anthony Quayle, the new Director, opened the season with his own production of *Macbeth*, which has been followed by Mr. John Gielgud's production of *Much Ado About Nothing* and, for the Birthday, Mr. Michael Benthall's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. All three plays are lavishly mounted and provide fine examples of the work of three highly talented designers. So far, the contribution made by the scenic artists has been considerable and perhaps many have found this the most impressive feature of the Festival.

"Macbeth"

Scenery and costumes for *Macbeth* have been designed by Edward Carrick, a son of Gordon Craig, and it is possible to see in the set a compromise between Craig's gigantic and impracticable monoliths and the necessary limits of the actual proscenium open-

ing and acting area at Stratford. A permanent feature is a huge cube of rock about seven feet square with steps, of course, up both the visible sides. This is backed by the cyclorama, steeped in cold light, for exterior scenes. For interiors, it is topped by low vaulting and gives Glamis Castle a crypt-like appearance. Such an intractable setting is excellent for crowd-work and with the very numerous company impressive pyramidal formations are achieved. It is harder for the individual lead, who is dwarfed and rather incommoded, to make an effect, however.

At the first performance, Diana Wynyard won admiration by bravely overcoming an accident that might have stopped the show, when she missed her foothold on the steps and fell. Her Lady Macbeth is a striking, flexible, many sided character, barbaric in appearance, capable of warmth and of cool withdrawal. She reaches a climax nearing hysteria after Macbeth's hallucinations at the banquet and thenceforward seems to lose faith in him and noticeably turns from him. Godfrey Tearle's Macbeth is moody and

hag-ridden, impressive but rather mournfully sententious. More civilised than the people who surround him, he seems to be less an arrogant usurper than a tired scion of a royal house. Leon Quartermaine, dressed like an absent-minded but eminently respectable furrier, is a Banquo of outstanding honesty and his ghost, having shed some of his skins, is invincibly piteous and terrible. Julian Amyes is saintly and senile as Duncan. Costume determines this. He is arrayed in an ample cloak, holds a crozier-like staff and is attended by a child in red as page—a fine picture for a Christmas card, though Duncan is too wobbly for Wenceslas and the child too tender for his page.

It used to be customary to strengthen the Witch trio by the inclusion of at least one male actor. Here all three are men and one of them does not even wear a skirt. They also play the three murderers with very little change. Consequently, when Macbeth taunts them and they reply from behind their masks, "We are men, my liege," the line has an unprecedented application. Clement McCallin in pigtails and pelts looks like a North American Indian and makes an unusually strong Malcolm. Harry Andrews, too, is a fine, resolute, dramatic figure as Macduff. How Scotland could have got into such a mess with two such men of recognised rank on the side of law and justice becomes a great mystery.

The company is numerous and hairy thralls swarm up the steps and over the fore-stage that now properly reduce the distance between the play and the beholders. Paul Hardwick, brought on on a stretcher with legs bound and breast flayed, delivers the wounded sergeant's lines with a good, coarse, Scottish accent. This accent also helps John Slater to put over the drunken Porter's time-hallowed obscenities. There is incidental music by Ernest Irving.

"Much Ado About Nothing"

John Gielgud has not hitherto been connected with the Memorial Theatre and for that reason his production of *Much Ado About Nothing* has an added importance. People who expected something superlative from Mr. Gielgud have not been disappointed. This is a production which will long be remembered. It is marvellously complete. The scenery is novel and varied; the costumes are handsome and in the cast every part is well fitted. Society in Messina is highly cultivated and easy good-humour prevails in all their meetings. Accent again is on decor. Marino Andreu has devised a scheme of decoration for Leonato's house and garden that is astonishingly attractive and ingenious. Leonato's servants in emblazoned livery move the screens which transform his house to his garden or vice

versa without any break in the action. The garden scenes often recall pre-Raphaelite pictures. The Prince of Arragon and his retinue are dressed in the rich colours beloved of the Brotherhood and the romantically decorative style of architecture supports the idea.

The Watch that assembles in the dusk of evening outside an Italian church consists of ugly and ragged but vitally comic creatures like Pieter Breughel's subjects. The church itself is revealed by the usual screen movements and the whole stage becomes a church interior. The company enter up right, dip their fingers in imaginary holy water and cross themselves before taking their places. Those of highest rank come down left, where a light shines off stage, indicating the sanctuary, and avoiding the crude theatricality of introducing an altar. Here the friar enters and here he leads off Hero after her collapse.

There is considerable acting area now in front of the proscenium curtain and the Tomb scene is played on the fore-stage, before the curtain and with the dirge spoken. That it so won applause is a triumph of production.

Diana Wynyard plays Beatrice with an easy, natural grace. Her thrusts at Benedick are made with such feline sweetness that he is amazed to find he has been pounced. At the point whereat "a star danced," Miss Wynyard achieved a gentle emotional effect of sweet pathos rarely gained by an actress in this part. It is unusual to be moved in this way by Beatrice. Anthony Quayle was an easy-going, good-humoured Benedick, pleasant, friendly and sincere. His passage with Beatrice in the church was distinguished by sincerity, his voice and attitude seeming to express genuine and proper feeling. Harry Andrews gave a full and lively performance as Don Pedro, handsome, witty and princely. Clement McCallin was cold and sinister but correct in his bearing as Don John. He did not limp or appear to have suffered a bombardment, which was all to the good. Philip Guard was small, shapely, husky and emotional as Claudio. Leon Quartermaine was very much at home in the cultivated *bonhomie* of Leonato. In the part of his brother Antonio, who seems to be an elder brother, yet a sort of poor relation, which is strange for those days, Michael Gwynn took a trick with his well simulated and accurately controlled outburst against Pedro and Claudio. George Rose worked Dogberry's part with all the power and skill of a born master of the comic range. He expanded to the monstrous low magnificence of this delicious character and every syllable, move and pause fell into place and provoked admiring mirth. He was well abetted by the scambling Verges, well up to tradition, of William Squire. A pleasing novelty was the

(Continued on page 38)

Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN

FOUR plays opened in New York since our last report, and the four of them have already gone to whatever place it is that bad plays go, so rather than rake up the coals, we will merely list them for the record and rack our brains to try and say something nice about each and every one.

First, in order of arrival and departure, was *Magnolia Alley* by George Batson, starring Jessie Royce Landis and featuring Jackie Cooper, making his Broadway stage debut. The programme listed this as a comedy, and it concerned itself with a middle-aged boarding house keeper in a sleepy, Southern town, whose main interest in life seemed to be sipping mint juleps and straightening out her paying and non-paying guests' sex life. To say something nice about this one, we have to go pretty far afield and remember that several years ago the author wrote a comedy-melodrama, *Ramshackle Inn*, for Zasu Pitts, and while the script was rather creeky, it did allow Miss Pitts a chance to be funny—and we never got around to saying a thing about it in these pages, that is, until now.

Next on the scene was *The Happiest Years* by Thomas Coley and William Roerick, another comedy according to the programme, this time about a veteran going to college on the G.I. Bill of Rights, who almost has his marriage wrecked by his meddling mother-in-law. Among the nice things to be said about this production is that it brought Peggy Wood back to Broadway after quite a spell, her last appearance being as the wife in Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*. And then there was Loring Smith as an expansive travelling salesman, loaded with bad jokes, worse gags and putrid puns, and June Walker as his adoring second wife, who found them all more hilarious than Danny Kaye and Arthur Askey combined, and Loring and Walker, sweeping across the stage in as broad a manner as possible, made a really funny team. Perhaps the authors should have written their play around them.

The third ill-fated venture was George Abbott's production of *Mrs. Gibbon's Boys* by two radio writers, Will Glickman and Joseph Stein, and they must be credited with a wacky and original idea. It seems Mrs. Gibbons, a feather as well as a lame brain, could see no harm or wrong in her three darling boys, even though two were serving time in a penitentiary and one was on probation. Complications set in when the two incarcerated sons break out of jail and come



Fay Bainter and Jay Robinson in a scene from *Gayden*, the new play by Mignon and Robert McLaughlin which is mentioned below.

home to see their dear Mom before going on the lam. The only trouble was that this idea couldn't bear being stretched into three full acts, but it would have made a nifty revue sketch.

In the fourth play, *Gayden*, a melodrama by Mignon and Robert McLaughlin, another mother, Mrs. Sibley, was eventually forced to take her adoring son more seriously, for this sadistic sybarite, irresistible to women both before and after he was through with them, was proved to be a definite psychopath who would eventually kill if he had to, a theme which faltered rather badly in the first act, due to a grave casting error which made it inconceivable that any woman could be attracted to *Gayden*, and quite effective in the second act, when Fay Bainter, in one of her very fine performances as Mrs. Sibley, built up sympathy and suspense as she learnt with horror the truth of the accusations against her son and had to cope with the problem of his disposal.

But these four productions had no monopoly on the bad news of the month. A few unseasonably hot days burnt New York, business dropped and refused to rise, and immediately closing notices cropped up all over town. Tallulah Bankhead in *Private*



A scene from Sidney Kingsley's play *Detective Story*, starring Ralph Bellamy and Meg Mundy, which was reviewed at length in the last issue and which is surviving the seasonal slump on Broadway as mentioned below.

This unusual play is directed by Kingsley and produced by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse.

Lives; Edward, My Son, with Dennis King and Adrienne Allen in the roles created by Robert Morley and Peggy Ashcroft, and Cheryl Crawford's musical production of *Love Life* have already shuttered, and Moss Hart's comedy about show people, *Light Up The Sky*, and Lindsay and Crouse's *Life With Mother*, among others are on their way out. The latter's announcement came as something of a surprise, since it opened with a \$300,000 advance sale and went on to receive a perfect press, but somewhere along the line the public lost interest in *Life With Mother* and instead of running its expected five years, it was lucky to span the season.

Taking summer vacations before re-opening in New York late August-early September and then later going on a nation-wide tour are Maxwell Anderson's historical drama, *Anne of the Thousand Days*, starring Rex Harrison and Joyce Redman and Jean Giraudoux's delightful fantasy, *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, starring Martita Hunt. Mr. Harrison and Miss Hunt were recently awarded Tonies for their outstanding performances, a yearly award given in memory of the late Antoinette Perry, whose last directorial job on Broadway was *Harvey*, and this award to Miss Hunt proved to be the final push in a drive put on by the many fans she captured with her inspired portrayal, to get her billed above the play and not beneath it. And the wisdom of the management's decision was confirmed when the trade paper, *Variety*, polled the New York critics and Miss Hunt's *Madwoman* was

voted the best performance given by an actress in this 1948-49 season. In the male division, the nod went to Lee J. Cobb, who did not have to wait as long as Miss Hunt for star billing, for immediately after the management read his notices, praising his powerful portrayal of the pitiful failure in *Death of a Salesman*, the Cobb name went up in glittering lights.

* * *

But getting back to the weather—showmen, as usual, at this time of the year, are expecting a killing summer for everything but the smash hits with less than a dozen shows given a chance of surviving. These include Sidney Kingsley's melodrama in a police station, *Detective Story*; the musical version of *Charley's Aunt. Where's Charley?* starring Ray Bolger; Bobby Clark in *As the Girls Go*; the intimate revue, *Lend An Ear*; and such holdovers from previous seasons as the longest run play in New York, *Born Yesterday*; *A Streetcar Named Desire* over 600 performances old, and *Mister Roberts* starring Henry Fonda. And then, of course, there are the recent fabulous hits, the big three, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*; Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*, and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, where tickets are at a premium, and a very handsome premium, indeed. It is reported that some ticket brokers are illegally asking and getting sixty dollars per seat from those who can't wait to see Ezio Pinza make love to Mary Martin the old fashioned way in *South Pacific*.



Oberammergau once again—in 1950

by ELISABETHE H. C. CORATHIEL

ONE takes it for granted that the serious student of theatrical matters has a general idea of the Oberammergau story—how, in 1634, after their village had been almost depopulated by the Plague, the Oberammergauers made a Vow to enact the Passion of Our Lord every tenth year, as a religious exercise—"Whereupon" (says the old chronicle) "all further deaths from Plague ceased, although many had symptoms of the disease still upon them."

FOR more than three hundred years the peasants of Oberammergau have succeeded in keeping alive an art-form which was once universal throughout the Christian world, and now has its last strong-hold there. Wars, occasional Government edicts and other external circumstances have from time to time threatened the Passion Play with extinction, but invariably the tenacity of the villagers has triumphed, and they have succeeded in loyally living up to the Vow made by their fore-fathers.

All modern stage tradition being largely based on the "Mysteries" sponsored by the ancient Church, the Oberammergau Passion Play, as a genuine survival of medieval dramatic enterprise, has a special interest for students of stage-craft. But the play itself has not stood still. It has developed with the times. Several successive versions are known to have been used. The earliest extant copy, dated 1660, is as naïve as the English Mysteries and Moralities adopted by medieval Trade Guilds, and was obviously based on still earlier models. About the middle of the 18th century the Passion Play fell under Jesuit influence and was tricked out with a wealth of symbolism, florid speeches and grandiose, spectacular production thoroughly in keeping with the Baroque period. Eventually the good taste of the peasants them-

selves rebelled against these extravagances, and they appealed to the Monks of Ettal Monastery to make them a version better suited to their unpretentious, forthright way of life. The evolution of the Play since then has tended more and more towards simplicity. Gradually the symbolic figures, the crudities and the *diablerie* of the older texts have fallen away (the scene, for instance, where the Angel snatched the halo from Judas' head on his departure for the Betrayal, and the descent upon him, after his suicide, by a band of devils, who would drag him off to Hell, not before he had been disembowelled in full view of the audience and his entrails—made of fried pancake batter!—greedily devoured by a swarm of cloven-footed imps, the one incident which was perhaps lamented in its passing by the schoolboys privileged to take part in it).

The version finally made by Alois Daisenberger, the Parish Priest, about a hundred years ago, is the one still in use. An entirely modernised version was contemplated under the Nazi regime, following the 1934 tercentenary performances; but the revival due for 1940 was abandoned owing to the war, and now that the village has been thoroughly de-Nazified, the villagers will doubtless be glad to fall back upon the Daisenberger text which has served them for so long.



(Above): Hans Lang, who is unconnected with either Anton or Alois, was understudy for Christus in 1934 after playing the Apostle John in 1930. This is a typical Oberammergau "character head." (Right): Anny Rutz, who may be chosen for the *third* time to take the role of the Madonna. This would be without precedent.



The Oberammergau Passion Play is an amateur production in the strictest sense of the word. The players frankly consider themselves unfettered by the necessity of conforming to professional standards of acting; it is the feeling that counts—their own particular conception of the religious emotions the scenes awaken, and the expression of those emotions without resort to technical tricks. In the fact that it enables us to recapture the fervor which inspired the ancient religious dramas lies the chief lure of the Oberammergau production.

Disciplined and drilled the players certainly are, with that intense seriousness which marks most German effort—but the whole purpose of the acting is “to hold the mirror up to nature,” avoiding anything that might strike an artificial note. All shams—false wigs, make-up, trick lighting, and so on, are strictly taboo; the open-air stage is lit by the light of day, in all its changing moods of cloud and weather, and the appearance of every individual player must be capable of standing up to this test. Hence the fact that “character heads,” produced by allowing hair and beards to grow, and so *living* the various parts in the ordinary every-day transactions of private life that eventually the people physically resemble the Biblical characters they are cast to portray, are such arresting features of the Oberammergau village scene.

No professionals ever appear in the Play,

nor are the players allowed to take engagements elsewhere. To do so would automatically debar them from ever again appearing on their native stage. That is why, despite the most tempting offers, the Passion Play has never been staged outside Oberammergau. Moreover, only actual inhabitants of the village are eligible.

This rule, incidentally, raises some entirely new issues for the revival planned to take place next year.

In the safety of the Bavarian mountains, the village became a favourite place of refuge while Germany was being blitzed. Now the population is swollen out of all proportion with displaced persons, every cottage having its undiminished quota of refugees. Will these newcomers, on the plea of residence, claim a share in the Play?

There is a lot of strong feeling about this. The oldest families—some can trace their lineage back in unbroken succession for six hundred years—are great sticklers for tradition and guard their rights with a jealous pride. On the other hand, native talent has been much depleted by the ravages of war, and the serious gaps in the ranks of actors, singers and musicians may leave no choice but the recruitment of new blood.

The principal roles, however, are not likely to be affected.

Within living memory, the Christus has been almost exclusively associated with the

(Continued on page 36)

Wonder Boy

by

ERIC JOHNS

PLAYGOERS at the Ambassadors are bewitched from the moment the curtain creeps up to reveal a bleak mountain-top in Carolina, where witch-cries break the silence of a night in *Dark of the Moon*. This fascinating play concerning the marriage of Barbara Allen to the witch-boy who yearned to become human, has been produced with more than a touch of magic by Peter Brook. With the simplest of settings and not a name in the cast, it is playing to capacity every night. People come away so moved by this supernatural experience that for once they give a thought to the producer. Who is this boy of twenty-four with a genius for production that escapes many an established director old enough to be his grandfather?

Strangely enough, though Peter Brook can gain such compelling effects with his actors, particularly in crowd scenes, such as the revivalist meeting in *Dark of the Moon*, he has never been an actor himself. At school he played a French prisoner in *Henry V* and the First Player in *The Beggar's Opera*. They were both also-ran parts, but served to give him some insight into how a stage production comes into being. They also convinced him that he would one day enjoy standing outside a cast and moulding the players according to his own theories.

At sixteen he left school and before becoming an Oxford undergraduate the following year, joined the staff of a film studio and gained valuable experience in script-writing, cutting and directing. During his first year at Oxford he wanted to produce for the O.U.D.S., but the authorities informed him that he was not eligible, having been so short a time at the university. The boy was ambitious and anxious to get his teeth into his first production. During a vacation he chose *Doctor Faustus* and staged it at the miniature Torch Theatre, off Knightsbridge. The cast sold sufficient seats in advance to make sure the rent was covered and the curtain would be allowed to rise. It was no ordinary production, as Alastair Crowley was called in to advise on black magic, but it never came to anything and none of the cast appear to have made good since.

Back in Oxford, as the O.U.D.S. could make no use of his talents, Mr. Brook decided to turn his attention to films. He started a film society, which was so popular that enough money was acquired in one year to enable them to make a film of their own. With Mr. Brook as director, they chose to adapt Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. The film was subsequently shown in London and brought the young director into the limelight.



PETER BROOK

(Portrait by Angus McBean)

After leaving Oxford he dabbled in films again, making shorts and advertising "epics" for well-known brands of tea, tonics and washing powders. Yet all the time, he longed to work in the theatre.

The turning point came when, after his production of Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine* at the little Chanticleer Theatre, he was invited to produce an E.N.S.A. touring version of *Pygmalion* with Mary Grew in the leading part. William Armstrong happened to see the dress rehearsal and quickly informed Sir Barry Jackson that he had discovered a youngster with dazzling gifts, waiting for a chance to come into his own. Sir Barry invited the boy to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, where he produced *Man And Superman*, *King John* and *The Lady From The Sea*. The boy found a group of sensitive players who soon responded to his ideas and willingly worked all day on Sunday to perfect the finer points. When Sir Barry went to Stratford-upon-Avon he gave Mr. Brook the opportunity to produce *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Romeo And Juliet*, with Daphne Slater and Laurence Payne as the lovers. In London he produced three much-discussed Jean-Paul Sartre plays—*Vicious Circle*, *Men Without Shadows* and *The Respectable Prostitute*, as well as *The Brothers Karamazov*. Covent Garden claimed his services and on that vast stage he directed new versions of *Boris Godunov*, *La Boheme* and *Figaro*. At the moment he is working on a production of *The Olympians*, the new Arthur Bliss opera which (Continued overleaf)

will be seen at Covent Garden in the autumn. It is doubtful if any other young man in the history of our theatre can have been responsible for so much magnificent work while still in the early twenties.

Peter Brook's career goes to show that age has nothing to do with one's success or ability as a producer. It is a flair apparent at the outset, though some benefit will naturally be gained from experience. One who saw Irving, Ellen Terry, Duse, Bernhardt and half-a-dozen other immortals cannot claim to be a good producer simply on the strength of his playgoing experience. Peter Brook, who never saw any of them, but who is well read and widely travelled, will probably offer more attractive entertainment with a dazzlingly original conception of his own. He is the first to pay homage to the great figures of the past, but it is useless trying to recapture a glory that belonged to another day. We live in different times and must create our own glory.

A producer's first essential is to have ideas about the play in hand. He must believe in it and have the conviction and authority to impose his ideas upon the artists with whom he has to work. He must know how to deal with technicalities and personalities, which are his instruments, and he must be able to solve or circumvent all problems and difficulties occurring during the process of bringing the play to life. He must have the ability to translate the printed script to the living stage by understanding the technicians and artists under his control and being able to get the best out of them.

The general standard of play production has improved enormously in the past thirty years, which is one reason why Mr. Brook considers it unwise for a practising actor to direct a play. John Gielgud is one of the rare exceptions, but generally speaking, it is impossible for one man to excel in the two spheres of acting and producing at one and the same time. In Edwardian days, when little more than operatic production was expected in the theatre, it was easy enough for the star to stage-manage the rest of the cast in such a way that his own part was thrown into bold relief. Nowadays, even the smallest part calls for production, which means that the producer's job is a full-time one. Something is going to suffer if an actor plays a lead and produces at the same time.

Despite his youth, Peter Brook has made a profound study of acting, lighting, decor and stage-craft. His approach to each new production is fresh and individual. On seeing the script he does no more than conceive the production in broad outline. Not till he has seen the cast does he begin to work in finer detail. He plans to get the best possible production out of the particular artists engaged by the management and he treats the play according to their individual gifts and appearance. In this manner, as in *Dark of the Moon*, Mr. Brook's productions give the impression of being superbly cast. One of the secrets of his work is his flair for making the best of the material in hand and demanding no more of actors than they are capable. He cuts his coat according to his cloth, but at the same time gives the finished product a style which is a joy to both the wearer and the beholder.

Oberammergau Once Again (Continued)

name of Lang. To outsiders this is a little misleading—they are inclined to think that the part has become almost an hereditary one in a certain family. Nothing could be further from the truth. "Lang" happens to be one of the most common names in Oberammergau since the middle of the 18th century. Anton Lang, the memorable Christus of 1900, 1910 and 1922, was in no way related to Alois Lang, who played the part in 1930 and 1934. Twenty years seems to be the span a candidate for the Christus role can anticipate; Anton Lang's capacity endured for about that length of time and he ended up as Leader of the Chorus (the Chorus, in this play, is of classical conception, and has a most important part in the action). Although now in his fifties, Alois Lang stands a good chance of being chosen again, especially as, apart from his qualifications as an actor, he is physically best equipped to undertake this extremely strenuous role. The same cannot be said of another favoured candidate, Franz Zwink, who, though an able actor and a man of eminently suitable appearance, is handicapped by a war legacy of physical weakness which may render him unequal to the strain. If he is eventually chosen, he will be following in the footsteps of an ancestor, Jak Zwink, who was the Christus from 1800 to 1820.

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Whispers from the Wings

By
LOOKER ON

NOW that Kay Hammond has made a welcome return to the West End stage after her all-too-long illness, she has promised herself a treat in the form of a visit to the British Museum Reading Room. Having successfully passed the ordeal of her débüt as Mrs. Sullen in *The Beaux' Stratagem* at the Phoenix Theatre, she is anxious to slip right back into the past to learn what earlier critics said about her distinguished predecessors in that classic rôle.

Miss Hammond considers it a disadvantage for an artist to have seen a great actress in a part which she is later called upon to play herself. She never saw *The Beaux' Stratagem*, and during rehearsal purposely avoided seeking opinions on earlier productions, other than listening to her husband, John Clements, discoursing on the greatness of Dame Edith Evans as Mrs. Sullen. When Dame Edith played the part at the Royalty in Sir Nigel Playfair's 1930 revival, Mr. Clements played one of the highwayman's companions. Archer, the part he now takes at the Phoenix, was played by Godfrey Tearle, with Eric Portman as his brother-in-iniquity. The play captivated Mr. Clements in his youth and he has long cherished an ambition to see Miss Hammond as Squire Sullen's discontented wife.

After a distinguished career in Noel Coward comedies, and only two previous costume parts to her credit, in *The King Maker* and *Marriage A La Mode*, Miss Hammond naturally found Mrs. Sullen a difficult study. It is a far cry from *Blithe Spirit* to *The Beaux' Stratagem*, but with John Clements to produce and encourage her, Miss Hammond has bridged the chasm with delightful ease. She confesses that it is less easy to play Farquhar's comedy than Coward's. There is a saying among actors that a comedy as brilliantly written as *Blithe Spirit* practically plays itself, but the same cannot be said of *The Beaux' Stratagem* because life, humour and speech have so radically changed since it was written 240 years ago. The modern actress playing Mrs. Sullen has not the same intimate link with her audience as the one playing Elvira in *Blithe Spirit*. As soon as the Coward character opens her mouth she has direct contact with the audience, who know exactly what she is talking about. The actress playing in the earlier comedy has to give more serious thought to her lines and their inflection, in order to convey the meaning.

Mrs. Sullen appealed to Miss Hammond because the character, with its underlying human warmth, is something more than a brittle piece of theatrical comedy. Miss Hammond is the first to admit that her task has been made easier by the decorative costumes designed by Elizabeth Haffenden. No



KAY HAMMOND
(Portrait by Alexander Bender)

one will ever forget that saucy little hat so ingeniously fashioned from a posy of red roses and a few ears of waving barley, which, at Miss Hammond's command, so eloquently give point to her lines.

Already Miss Hammond has started her excursion into the Eighteenth Century by reading a life of George Farquhar, the author of this rollicking comedy. He started life as an actor in Ireland, but had to leave Dublin after seriously wounding a popular player in a stage-fight during a performance of Dryden's *The Indian Emperor*. Poverty dogged his footsteps to the end of his days. He came to London and finally wrote *The Beaux' Stratagem* during what he knew to be the last six weeks of his life. It was produced at the Haymarket only a short time before his untimely death at the age of 29. The original Mrs. Sullen was the captivating Nance Oldfield, who had previously been a barmaid at the Mitre Tavern in St. James's Market. Miss Hammond will be richly rewarded when she goes to the British Museum to discover how Mrs. Oldfield left her admirers at the Mitre to become the star attraction at the Haymarket.

So soaked is Miss Hammond in the 18th Century that she has adorned her dressing room at the Phoenix with some rare prints of Mrs. Abington, the original Lady Teazle. *(Continued overleaf)*

who, for one of her benefits, donned male attire and played Scrub, the man-of-all-work in *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Perhaps it was the sight of a print of Mrs. Abington as Millament in Congreve's *The Way of the World*, which made Miss Hammond confess a desire to play the part on some future occasion. In the same breath she admitted an affection for Ann Whitefield in *Man And Superman*, which might well prove her first Shaw part when London playgoers feel they would like a change from the society of Mrs. Sullen at the Phoenix.

Ballet Items

FOLLOWING their visit to the Florence Festival, Sadler's Wells Ballet Company return to Covent Garden on 3rd June, their season ending at the Opera House on the 18th with a performance of *Coppelia*.

The Marquis de Cuevas' Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo commence their six weeks' season at Covent Garden on 21st June. Among the dancers are Rosella Hightower, George Skibine, Andre Eglevsky with Tatiana Riabouchinska, Tamara Toumanova, Leonide Massine and David Lichine as guest artists.

Another interesting ballet event in June will be the Festival of Ballet at the Empress Hall, Earl's Court (from the 6th to the 18th) when Danilova, Frederick Franklin, Massine and Kalioujni will be dancing with the Metropolitan Ballet.

June number
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Stratford Festival (Continued)

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

black page, very competently played by Robin Dowell.

Michael Benthall, whose Victorian *Hamlet* last year will not be forgotten, has been responsible for the Birthday production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which unfolded itself rather slowly and creaked a little. The producer, in his speech at the close, paid tribute to Mendelssohn, to James Bailey, who had designed the scenery and costumes, to the stage staff and to the "lovely company." The elements of success were thus indicated in the order of their contributory influence. This play once chosen, the next question to be settled must be whether Mendelssohn is to dominate it or be excluded, for it is doubtful whether there is a middle way.

As the opening bars are played, only a grey curtain is visible. Lights are brought up slowly and the curtain is rendered transparent, revealing the opulent splendours of Theseus' Court in a crowded picture, glowing with colour. This is much more Venice than Athens. A raised rotunda occupies the right half of the stage. On the left is a Claude kind of perspective of palace façades and a wide canal or lake.

Harry Andrews was a virile and handsome Theseus with an agreeable roughness in his voice. Wynne Clark, stained brown and dressed like Queen Anne, played Hippolyta. Harold Kasket's Philostrate lisped and was made up to resemble an eunuch from a Beardsley illustration. Paul Hardwick as Egeus was persuasively naturalistic and suggested a member of the Bourse.

The lovers' quarrels in the wood were sufficiently strident to defeat the attempts of the electricians to establish a mood of poetry. Diana Wynyard endowed Helena generously with the comic spirit and seemed inclined to burlesque. The wood was a garden overblown with lilac, a grotto to which moonlight gave a murkily magical appearance. Mendelssohn's influence had been underlined rather substantially, and the result was a 19th century Germanic sort of picture. Oberon's rout was heavily eerie. Titania's consisted of strapping young women in flowing blue draperies. Children are not available now for these parts. The result is to leave the fairy business entirely to Mendelssohn and the lights. Puck was Philip Guard stained brown and naked but for a dark loin-cloth. At one of his best moments, when he is up a bank, peering from behind a tree, Kipling's Mowgli immediately comes to mind. William Squire, as Oberon, had a very sinister appearance but delivered his speeches straight. Kathleen Michael was inclined to lull and coo as Titania, but this seemed rather perfunctory as she looked always completely human. Of course, actors are

human, but after so much trouble has been taken by carpenters, painters, costumiers and electricians to suggest a fairy grotto, it is rather a pity that the idea cannot be supported by the pitch or inflexion of the human voice.

Among the clowns, Michael Gwyn as Flute was most original and amusing in a rather quiet way. He feigns a gentle bashfulness which is most engaging. George Rose was a valiant Snug but, of course, Snug is but Wall. John Slater gave good voice to Bottom, but he is physically small for the part. Even with the ass's head he seemed smaller than the fairies.

At a late hour the celebrants acclaimed the producer, designer and actors, and seemed loth to leave the floodlit theatre and pass into the town where flags of all nations flapped in homage to the mysterious and transcendent poet whose fortune it was to be born in Stratford-upon-Avon and whose choice it was to die there.

SOME RECENT BOOKS

AMONG some important books received which it is hoped to review in later issues are the following:—

“Sarah Bernhardt” by Lysiane Bernhardt (*Hurst & Blackett*, 21/- net); “The Actor and His Audience” by W. A. Darlington (*Phoenix House*, 12/6 net); “Young George Farquhar” by Willard Connelly (*Cassell*, 21/- net); “Magic—Top Secret” by Jasper Maskelyne (*Stanley Paul*, 18/- net); “The Ballet Lover’s Companion” by Kay Ambrose (*A. & C. Black*, 6/- net); “British Ballet” by Peter Noble (*Skelton Robinson*, 21/- net); “Ballet Tunes to Remember” by Florence M. Clark (*Nelson*, 5/- net); “Ballet Vignettes” by Arnold L. Haskell (*Albyn Press*, 10/6 net); “The Music Masters” edited by A. L. Bacharach (*Maurice Fridberg*, 15/- net); “The Stage Year Book, 1949” (*The Stage*, 10/6 net); “Home is Tomorrow,” play by J. B. Priestley (*Heinemann*, 7/6 net); “John Knox and Other Plays” by James Bridie (*Constable*, 10/- net); and “Restless Dream” novel by Leila MacKinlay (*Ward Lock*, 8/6).

BEAUTY NOTES

PREPARATIONS FOR SUMMER

WHITSUN and summer holidays draw nearer and, farmers excepted, all hope for a repetition of the Easter sunshine. With beauty preparations in good supply this year, even the most tender skin can have its full dose of sun and remain unburnt but delightfully tanned.

The Ardena summer range includes Sun-prüf cream, which is light and flesh tinted. Acting as a protection against the sun’s burning rays, it allows the health giving rays to penetrate to the skin. The cream can be used as a cool powder base and should be applied to any exposed surface. If the skin should begin to feel hot, a further application is necessary. Tubes 7/6.

If through carelessness the skin gets scorched by sun or wind Eight Hour Cream will cool and soothe. For those with sensitive skins this is an extremely useful cream, for, blended with Velva Cream it can be used as an exceptionally soothing night cream. Price 6/9.

Many people do not realise the danger to their eyes of over exposure to strong sun, which also produces ugly wrinkles. Ardena Eye lotion cools and refreshes the eyes and keeps them healthy against the glare of sun and the ravages of briny wind.

When preparing for your holiday do not forget that you hope your skin tone will be appreciably altered and buy a box of powder to match tan or give a tanned effect. Elizabeth Arden suggest Rose Rachel powder for a delicate glow, Rosetta Bronze or Light Summer Sun for a deeper bronze.

Removal of dark hair from bare legs is most necessary in some cases. Elizabeth Arden’s wax treatment removes surface hair and weakens the hair follicles so that when the hair eventually grows again it is in a weaker form. Whether one or two applications are needed in one summer depends on the individual tendency to grow hair.

Borage, mes amis !

George, what’s this vegetation ceremony you perform with the Pimm’s? Yes, these sprigs of greenery you launch on its bosom? Borage, eh? Oh, you mean *borage*! George, as a barman you have a great future. I mean, a man who finds something that actually improves the most heavenly drink on earth is definitely No. 1 in an esteemed profession.

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"Continental Revue"

AS *Continental Revue*, Andrew Vishynsky presents a small company of Continental, mostly Polish, artists who sing and dance. There is nothing of remarkable excellence but the mixture is unusual and pleasing.

Eugen Nako plays a guitar to which is attached a length of flex, which is plugged in to an electric terminal. The sound is thus amplified to the pitch of heavy machinery. Even this "pluggy" guitar needs long practice.

H.G.M.

Once Upon a Time Club

THREE is no pleasure finer than the well-told tale. John Boddington's venture should be widely known. The art of storytelling has become rare. His *Once Upon a Time Club* is formed to establish this oldest form of entertainment for the pleasure of children. There are two sessions at 4.30 for children under nine, and at 6 o'clock for older children. Seats are within pocket-money range, some as low as 6d. Knightsbridge is not noted for children, so, as success depends upon the attendance of children from a distance, be it known that adults in charge are welcomed and equally entertained.

H.G.M.

"Lady Julie"

STRINDBERG'S essentially intimate drama of the love of a lady for her valet is strong meat when acted in a Notting Hill Gate basement. The Fireside Theatre Club, which is using this unconventional manner of presentation, almost overcame the instinctive prejudice of a theatre - accustomed audience with a competent performance and some imaginative decor by Nial Hill. That they did not altogether succeed was not entirely their fault. Strindberg, although said to be ahead of his time when *Lady Julie* was written, is now only too far behind ours. The moral questions posed by the class system no longer convince: could it be that they bore?

J.H.

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Amateur Stage Notes & Topics

WHEN the British Drama League holds its annual conference at Harrogate on 3rd-11th June it will be combined with what is termed the "first amateur theatre week." Its two main purposes are that amateurs should show the public and one another how interesting and varied is the entertainment they can provide, and that amateurs desiring to improve their work can take counsel with professionals of high standing.

Most events take place in the Royal Hall, and an interesting variety includes talks and discussions, productions of plays like *The Trojan Women*, *Tartuffe*, *Noah*, *Beaux' Stratagem*. An exhibition has been arranged, and the scope of the whole event is such that it is hoped a wide public interest will be stimulated. At the annual conference on 4th June six resolutions on varying subjects are to be moved, of which that calling for "doing away with the competitive festival" seems to strike a familiar and controversial note.

* * *

Edward Percy's *The Art of the Playwright* (English Theatre Guild, 4/-) is notable for its downright commonsense in the author's foreword. It is a reprint of a lecture, followed by some examples of climax, dialogue, dialect. It is rare today to find Pinero praised for his craftsmanship, but Mr. Percy advocates his study in no half measures. "If more would-be dramatists would study Pinero critically, they would find in him the key to many of their difficulties." The examples quoted do not always live up to the standard of the author's practical advice, but it is on the whole a stimulating booklet for the novice.

Cue For Caroline was the title of an original musical comedy produced by the Y.W.C.A. Central Club in Queen Mary Hall too late in May for review this month.

Cambridge University Footlights are producing their May Week Revue at the Arts Theatre on 12th June. It will follow tradition in its all-male cast and book and score by the undergraduates.

Oxford University D.S. produce *The Tempest* in Worcester College Garden in the third week of June, first night the 15th.

The Educational Centres Association, in conjunction with the National Federation of Community Associations, is holding a summer course in drama under the direction of Mr. R. Newton. It will be held from 13th-27th August at Oxford. Details from the Association at 8 Endsleigh Gardens, W.C.1.

Phoenix Players, a new North East London group, produce the Soviet play *Squaring the Circle* on 23rd-24th June, at Lloyd Park Pavilion, Walthamstow.

PUBLICATION RECEIVED
Towards *The Sun*, play in three acts by J. Walker Robertshaw. Proscenium Press, 4/6.

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